

**SJ 29, Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting and HJ 1, Resolution Approving a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting**

**Government Administration and Elections Committee Public Hearing  
February 22, 2023**

Good afternoon Sen. Flexer, Rep. Blumenthal, Ranking Members Sampson and Mastrofrancesco and honorable members of the GAE Committee.

My name is Michele Jacklin and I am a member of the board of Common Cause in Connecticut, a nonprofit, nonpartisan citizens lobby whose goal is open, honest and accountable government. For the past 10 years or so, I have served as a poll worker in my hometown of Glastonbury.

Common Cause has long supported measures, in Connecticut and elsewhere, that enable the greatest number of eligible voters to exercise their franchise, which is a fundamental tenet of American democracy.

In accordance with that principle, I am testifying today in support of SJ 29 and HJ 1, either of which would amend the state Constitution to allow eligible voters to cast an absentee ballot without the need, as required now, to provide an excuse as to why they cannot vote in person.

Connecticut has some of the most restrictive absentee voting laws in the country. An affirmative action by the General Assembly on either of these measures would put the question on the Nov. 5, 2024 ballot. If voters approve, it would update Connecticut's archaic voting requirements and put our state in conformance with the majority of states that have already acknowledged that citizens lead busy and complicated lives.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), 27 states and Washington, D.C., offer "no-excuse" absentee voting, which means that any voter can request and cast an absentee/mail ballot, no excuse or reason necessary. Additionally, eight states conduct elections entirely by mail (California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Vermont and Washington), which means voters don't need to request a ballot, and instead automatically receive one.

The time has come for Connecticut to join other states in acknowledging that not every eligible voter is able to manage his or her life so that they can get to the

polls, especially when the polling place is inconveniently located. If people had the ability to vote by absentee ballot, they would not have to worry about family or work emergencies that could prevent them from voting in person.

Because of the Covid pandemic and emergency measures taken by Gov. Ned Lamont and the General Assembly, tens of thousands of eligible voters cast no-excuse absentee ballots in 2020, 2021 and 2022. That greatly reduced the number of voters who showed up in person.

We know that cities and towns across Connecticut are facing a difficult challenge in adequately staffing polling places. As a consequence of this constitutional amendment, some communities might be able to reduce the number of in-person polling places on Election Day and correspondingly, reduce the number of people needed to staff those locales.

In conclusion, Connecticut should be doing everything in its power to enable people to exercise their right to vote, the most fundamental right that we have in a democracy. Expanding vote-by-mail options seems the least that we can do to make that happen.

Respectfully,

The Board of Common Cause Connecticut

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